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### **What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?**

The CACFP is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Program designed to reimburse facilities for nutritious meals served to children or adults in a day care environment. The program provides reimbursement to childcare centers, adult care centers, emergency shelters, family day care homes and after-school programs for providing creditable meals to children or adults in their care. For the most part, the children served in this program must be 12 years of age or younger. However, there is also an after school "at risk" program that serves school-age children through the age of 18. The adults served in Adult Programs must be either functionally impaired or 60 years of age or older in a day care setting. Residential adult programs would not qualify.

The Child Nutrition Act of 1998 changed the way emergency shelters can participate in USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Emergency shelters can now participate in the CACFP effective July 1, 1999. Emergency shelters as defined by the Food Nutrition Service (FNS) are facilities that provide temporary housing for children and their parents or guardians. The shelter may be a public or private non-profit institution that provides support to at-risk children and their families.

In addition to the regular after school programs there is another component of the CACFP for after school "at risk" programs. For after school "at risk" programs to participate in the CACFP the program site must be located in a geographical area served by a school (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) in which 50% or more of the children enrolled are eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

### **Who can participate?**

Organizations wishing to participate in the CACFP may be private non-profit organizations, private for-profit organizations, or public organizations. Non-profit organizations automatically qualify for the CACFP except in the case of the "at risk" afterschool care program, which has additional requirements. Private for-profit adult care organizations wishing to participate in the program must have at least 25% of the adults enrolled in the center receiving Title XIX funds (Medicaid). Private for-profit childcare organizations wishing to participate in the program must have at least 25% of the children enrolled in the center receiving Title XX funds. In Indiana, Title XX funds are included in childcare voucher payments.

Childcare centers, adult care centers, emergency shelters and after-school programs may enter into direct agreement with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), School and Community Nutrition (SCN) to participate in the CACFP or may choose to enter into an agreement with a sponsoring organization. Sponsoring organizations are approved by IDOE/SCN to determine a center's eligibility for participation in the program, assist centers in the preparation of program paperwork, provide training on program rules and regulations, and monitor all sponsored centers for compliance with program rules and regulations. The sponsoring organization submits one claim on behalf of its centers and subsequently distributes the reimbursement to each center. Family day care home providers are required to enter into an agreement with a day care home sponsor. The day care home sponsor has the same responsibilities as the administrative sponsor previously mentioned. Any other organization that owns more than one site is considered a center sponsor, and also has additional responsibilities.

Program participants receive reimbursement based upon the number of meals that meet the meal pattern requirements and are served to enrolled participants. All CACFP participating organizations are required to attend training and must renew their application for the Program each year.

Childcare centers, adult care centers and after-school programs are required to determine the eligibility for free or reduced price meals for each child/adult enrolled in their program. The family of the child or adult participating in the program completes an Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. The information presented in the application is used by center personnel to determine if the child/adult should be classified as free, reduced-price, or paid (i.e., not eligible for free or reduced-price meals). The CACFP reimburses centers at a different rate for each classification. Family day care home providers are not required to make this determination and meals are reimbursed at either a Tier I or Tier II rate. In addition, Applications for Free and Reduced-Price Meals are not required for the "At Risk" After School Care Programs or for Emergency Shelters.

Day care home sponsors are required to determine the eligibility of each family day care home enrolled in their sponsorship for Tier I or Tier II reimbursements. The tiering system was established to provide higher reimbursement rates for homes in which either the care provider and/or the children served are income eligible. Tier I eligibility is determined based on the provider's location in an elementary school zone where 50% or more of the children qualify for free or reduced lunch; the provider's location in a census track where 50% or more of the children qualify for free or reduced lunch; or the provider's personal income qualifies for free or reduced priced lunch. If none of these conditions exist, the provider is a Tier II home. However, a Tier II home provider may be reimbursed the higher rate for those children in her/his home who qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Program participants submit claims on a monthly basis to IDOE/SCN to report the number of children/adults enrolled in the center by category (i.e., free, reduced, paid), and number of meals served. Participants are reimbursed for the meals served using

reimbursement rates established by USDA. Day care home providers are reimbursed a flat rate for the number of meals served. Day care home sponsors also receive an administrative reimbursement based on the number of homes sponsored by the organization. Sponsors of unaffiliated centers are permitted to charge up to 15% of meal reimbursement for administrative fees.

### **What are the responsibilities of the Indiana Department of Education, School and Community Nutrition?**

IDOE/SCN's responsibilities for the program include: program outreach, training of current and new sponsors, approval of applications, payment of claims, performance of reviews, and federal reporting of information related to the CACFP. Each one of these areas is explained below.

- Program outreach – IDOE/SCN is responsible for the promotion of the CACFP in Indiana. The office must target organizations that serve children or adults in a non-residential program (except in the case of emergency shelters). This responsibility requires working with individual organizations, communities, and umbrella organizations to encourage participation in the CACFP.
- Training of current and new sponsors – IDOE/SCN is responsible for providing training for all CACFP sponsors. The purpose of the training is to teach program rules and regulations; encourage participants to operate successful programs; identify areas where providers can improve program operations, participation and meal service; and update participants on any changes in program requirements for the upcoming year. Administrative, Day Care Home and Center sponsors are required to disperse the information from this training to all organizations participating under them.
- Approval of applications – IDOE/SCN receives and processes applications of organizations wishing to participate in the CACFP. All completed applications must be processed within thirty days of receipt of a complete application. The new application process includes training (orientation and program training), submitting a complete application, a pre-operational visit, and IDOE/SCN determining the organization's eligibility for participation in the program.
- Payment of claims – The program participant must submit all claims on-line to IDOE/SCN following the month in which meals were served.
- Performance of reviews and audits – IDOE/SCN is responsible for reviewing sponsors and sites to ensure that they are in compliance with program rules and regulations. ALL Program reviews are unannounced. Program regulations provide guidance for the frequency of the reviews conducted by IDOE/SCN staff. Program participants receive a pre-operational visit prior to the organization being approved to participate in the CACFP. This visit is used for approval, but is also an opportunity for an organization to make sure it understands everything completely before beginning the program. All program participants receive their first review after they have submitted their first claim.

The purpose of this review is to ensure that the participant is operating the program properly and to provide technical assistance as needed.

In addition to scheduled reviews, IDOE/SCN staff may visit a program participant to provide technical assistance, follow-up on violations discovered in a previous review, or conduct an investigation due to a complaint of the program. Program participants who have repeat violations and are unable to correct the deficiencies may be terminated from the program. Audits may also be required on programs participating in the CACFP if spending of federal funds meets certain thresholds.

- Federal reporting of information related to the CACFP – IDOE/SCN is required to report various types of information to USDA regarding CACFP operations. The office completes monthly, quarterly and annual reports for USDA detailing funds spent, meals served and other financial information. IDOE/SCN is also required to provide periodic information related to the number of sponsors, sites, and nonprofit organizations enrolled in the program; as well as, the number of reviews conducted.

As the administering agency for CACFP, IDOE/SCN also assumes the responsibility for the development of policies and procedures relative to the program. USDA regulations provide the guidelines by which IDOE/SCN must administer the program and grants authority for IDOE/SCN to implement policies necessary to clarify program rules or improve program operations. The state policies cannot be in conflict with USDA rules and regulations. Sponsors may appeal any adverse action taken by the state.

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